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2. THE SARAKATSANI OF ZAGORI

The community of Sarakatsan shepherds which I describe in this study numbers about 4,000 souls.[18] In summer they are found in Zagori, a mountainous district north-east of the town of Jannina on the western limits of the Pindus range in the province of Epirus. Here they graze their sheep and goats from May until the early days of November; or as they would calculate it, between the feast-days of St. George and St. Demetrius which mark their seasonal migrations between plain and mountain (and are celebrated according to the old Julian calendar, that is, on the 6th May and the 8th November by the new calendar). In each Zagori village with high grasslands there is a local gathering of Sarakatsan families which exploit the grazing land of the community and add to it a summer population of 100–300 men, women, and children. Since 1938 the majority of these shepherd families have enjoyed the same citizenship and grazing rights as the sedentary villagers of Zagori from whom previously they had to rent their pastures. There are 152,000 sheep and goats in the Zagori of which 85,000 sheep and 13,000 goats belong to the Sarakatsani.[19] Although the eastern villages of the district are Koutsovlach in speech and sentiment very few of their inhabitants are, any longer, transhumant shepherds, and the pastures of these villages are used by the Sarakatsani, who indeed occupy almost all the higher pastures of the district, grazing their flocks on the lands of 30 of the 43 villages which today constitute Zagori; the remaining villages are low lying (where it is easier to keep animals throughout the year), or they are without extensive areas of grass.

In the winter the community is more widely dispersed. The Sarakatsani move down from the mountains to the coastal plains and valleys over an area which extends from the Albanian frontier as far south as the towns of Arta and Preveza and even beyond.

[18] There are no census details for the Sarakatsani as such. And police restriction on my movements prevented me from carrying out a complete survey of all the sheep villages in Zagori. However, on the basis of my own incomplete figures and information supplied by the Ministry of Agriculture for pastoralism in Zagori generally, this figure is most unlikely to be far from the truth.

[19] Thus there are 24·5 sheep and goats per head of population among the Zagori Sarakatsani.

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plains and reduced the size of their flocks. Others found small pastures in the area around Paramythia and until 1930 some families, at least, were able to cross the Albanian frontier for their winter grass. In 1944 the flight into Albania of the Muslim villagers of Thesprotia opened new areas of grazing to the Sarakatsani of Zagori, but these, too, are now less extensive after the settlement of refugees from Northern Epirus and the claims of Christian villagers who live in the district. Generally since 1927, when the division of chiftlik lands was substantially effected, the difficulties over winter grazing have grown more acute each year. By 1955 it was seldom possible to find winter grazing for a flock of more than 1,000 sheep in one area. One consequence has been the reduction in the size of the flocks of leading Sarakatsan families. Before 1922 it was not exceptional for a man to own 2,000 sheep; today a flock of 500 is considerable.

The disappearance of winter grassland threatened the basis of transhumant pastoralism not only in Epirus but also in the other provinces of continental Greece. Although they could do little to alter fundamentally the new conditions they had created by the distribution of winter grassland for cultivation, the Government attempted in 1930 to protect the position of the shepherds by a law[22] establishing rights of protected lease (δικαιώματα ἐνοικιοστασίου), so that a shepherd who had enjoyed a grazing lease on a pasture during one winter had the right to return to it in the following autumn (and at a price determined by the Government). There remained, however, various conditions under which such leases might lapse, and the area of available grazing continued to decrease, although now at a less disastrous pace.

After 1922 grazing conditions did not change radically in the Zagori. The temporary emigration of Zagori men to other parts of the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the permanent emigration of whole families of Zagori villagers to the towns and cities of the Greek kingdom. But the grasslands remained to be exploited by the Sarakatsani. In 1938, however, a law[23] was passed by the Government of Metaxas that was to have important

[22] Law 4818 of 14/16 July 1930, 'Concerning the lease of grazing lands'.
[23] Decree 1223 of 3/4 May 1938, 'Concerning the settlement of Pastoralists'.

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consequences. It instructed that the names of semi-nomad shepherds should be added to the citizenship roll of either the summer or the winter village of their grazing grounds. A majority of the Sarakatsani with grazing in the western and central Zagori elected to write their names on the roll of their summer village.[14] The purpose of the central government was to control an untidy and potentially disorderly element in a state based on the village community of settled peasantry. However, the proud villagers of Zagori with their inherited pretensions were deeply dismayed at this act of arbitrary legislation. While their own youth left for the town and city, rights of citizenship in the villages were by law extended to uncivilized and uneducated shepherds. Traditionally the Sarakatsani had built their summer huts on the grazing land they leased. But now possessing the rights of village citizenship, some bought houses in the depopulated village and others began to build their groups of huts on its outskirts. Daily contact between the two communities in these circumstances intensified their traditional antipathy. Yet at the same time the newly acquired local voting rights necessarily integrated the Sarakatsani into the village patronage system, and the villagers' attitude of open contempt forced them slowly but certainly to a growing conformity with village habits at least in their more outward and material aspects.

There were also important changes in the forms of co-operation between families within the community. Previously the grazing of areas carrying two or three thousand sheep had been sold each year by Zagori villages to the leading families of Sarakatsani. For these alone had the wealth and experience to carry through the negotiation. Through the lease of this grazing, the head of such a family, the tselingas (τσέλιγγας), also controlled a number of other families who contracted to work with him for the summer or winter period. The nucleus of the group was co-operating families (σμίχτες) often related by kinship or marriage; but a number of unrelated men with few or no animals of their own were also associated as wage shepherds.

[14] However, a village could resist the application if it was able to show that grazing land was not available. Since the pressure on grazing land was greater in the plains, Sarakatsani often had no other choice but to apply for citizenship in a mountain village.

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is something impermanent, almost fortuitous, about the local neighbourhood whether in summer or winter.[1] At the same time the significance and solidarity of the total Sarakatsan community is emphasized. The expression, 'we, the Sarakatsani of Zagori' is common; but 'we, the Sarakatsani of Tsepelevo' (or any other village), is heard less frequently.

Yet it is in the local neighbourhood that hostility between Sarakatsani and Zagori villagers is actively expressed. Property rights are jealously guarded, and in the absence of fencing it is inevitable that Sarakatsan sheep and mules are discovered in the crops or gardens of villagers. They trespass regularly and deliberately on certain areas of grassland reserved for the cutting of hay on which the villagers rely to feed their livestock during the winter months. The shepherds also attempt to defraud the village treasury by concealing some of their sheep when the flock is numbered each spring. For their part the Sarakatsani resent the fines they must pay in the agricultural court for the depredations committed by their animals. They believe, too, that they are cheated in the allotment of watering time by the villager who regulates the irrigation of village vegetable gardens. There are quarrels over the regulations for the grazing and watering of mules, which favour the villagers. There is trouble over the use of springs for washing clothes and over the refusal of the Sarakatsani to use earth-closets. Indeed, there is trouble between the two groups at every point of contact between them. Since their rights are entrenched by the decrees passed in the village council and because the executive administration of village affairs is necessarily in the hands of villagers who are in residence all the year, the villagers are almost always in a legally secure position in differences with Sarakatsani. It follows that the villager appeals to the law which happens to favour his interests, the Sarakatsanos more often turns to self-help and violence. Justice is not a question of the impartial administration of existing law, although this, too, may be lacking in the view of the Sarakatsani. If the law does not allow a man to protect the interests and dignity of his family, then it does not represent justice.

[1] In this connexion it is worth remarking that before the Sarakatsani became village citizens in 1938 a family, or stani, did not necessarily go to the same grazing village in Zagori each year.

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S G 608 557 Naturally, merchants and others are well aware of the motives behind the naïve manœuvres of the Sarakatsani. But, as we have already said, they also gain various advantages. They do not, except in the unusual case of a very rich or powerful individual, become lavish patrons. Few of them give away anything for nothing. But they become helpful rather than hostile, they will exert their influence for their spiritual kinsmen and in doing so they themselves win prestige. A shared system of values regulates their mutual behaviour in which friendship and trust replace hostility and suspicion.

3. VILLAGE FRIENDSHIP AND PATRONAGE

G 623 644 [622] In the villages authority rests in the hands of a council of five members. From its own number it elects a President and Vice-President while the choice of the council itself is the result of local elections which are held every four years. In these,

S [641] [666] all adult villagers of both sexes, and those shepherd families who possess citizenship rights in the village, are entitled to vote.

G 665 666 623 For electoral purposes any person may form a party providing he can present to the electorate a card with the names of seven candidates. In practice village elections seldom produce more than two parties, those who support the President in power because they are his friends, and those who want a change because they are not his friends. These parties are essentially personal followings, not corporate associations, and there is not necessarily any direct alignment with the parties of national politics. The citizens vote by handing in the party card of their choice with four crosses against those of the seven candidates who are preferred. The party which polls the greater number of cards wins the election. The four candidates of the successful party who record the largest aggregates of personal votes become members of the council. The person amongst the candidates of the defeated party or parties who claims the largest number of personal votes is also elected to the council as the representative of the defeated minority's interests. The five members of the new

G [622] [624] council then proceed to elect two of their number as President and Vice-President. These men hold office for two years, at the end of which period their authority may either be confirmed for the remaining two years of the council's term of office, or they may be replaced by the election of new officers.

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S G 648 S 662 G 647 554 [558]

of his power, he emphasizes his status before the eyes of his subordinates and stresses their dependence on himself. To listen patiently to the incoherent ramblings of a Sarakatsanos, the name of whose very profession, shepherd (βλάχος), is a synonym for stupidity, much less to take trouble and thought over assisting him, would be to lose prestige and betray the status of his position, the validation of which lies in pride, not humility. Generally such officials are curt, rude, and unhelpful, or to indulge their attendants, use the shepherd for a show of witty mockery. Direct bribery is out of the question in the absence of secrecy, and it is also dangerous, since the corruptibility of officials grows less certain as the hierarchy is ascended.

S G 648 571 G 693 554

Where he cannot reach or influence a high State official, the shepherd turns to his patron or, if he is a man without influence, to the patron of a more powerful kinsman. The patron may be a man of any profession with political influence in Jannina, a doctor, engineer, or merchant; but most frequently he is a lawyer. The lawyer in Greek rural society is not only the man who gives legal advice and attends a client in court, but he also acts as an intermediary between the peasant or shepherd and the State authorities. He acts in the general role of a professional 'fixer'.

S G 648 656 S 641

Some of the difficulties which arise between the State and the Sarakatsan community have their origin in the necessarily general character of government legislation. Perhaps it is decided to protect the nation's forests. A law is passed which forbids the grazing of goats in forested areas. Incorporated within the general law are a number of conditional clauses relating to the definition of various kinds of forest, the priority for their protection, and the question of hardship to pastoralists which may lead to a relaxation of the restrictions in certain circumstances and in certain categories of forest. But the law-making assembly cannot legislate for all possible local contingencies. The administration and interpretation of the law lie in the hands of the public servants.

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However, within the public service there exists a certain inertia and reluctance to delegate power. A senior official defines the unequivocal superiority of his status in the hierarchy by forcing his junior officers to refer to himself every case which involves the initiative of judgement and decision. In this manner

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233 Finally, socio-economic policy benefitting farmers and herders.

This policy includes:

[452] 1. Financing by the Agricultural Bank of Greece and the granting of raw materials on credit.

[474] 2. The creation and running of cooperatives for buying and selling products.

[476] 3. Agricultural social security.

* * * *

179 This enumeration of the events that form the basis for change, though brief, nevertheless answers the questions posed above.

The assault on the life of the Sarakatsani clearly comes from the outside. It emanates from the surrounding milieu and not from their own milieu, and it can be narrowed to various factors.

The space occupied by the Sarakatsani is conspicuously narrowed.
[233] The ecological basis of their society is modified. Physically speaking,
[361] isolation in distant regions and nomadic herding become impossible.
Moreover, socially speaking, isolation is no longer justified since
[641] surrounding society is no longer hostile. The civic rights of Sarakatsani are recognized, protected and respected.

Kinship, cooperation and the community are losing their meaning.
[659] Once the state undertakes to finance herding, to ensure education of guarantee security, to exercise foresight to organize cooperation, etc., the omnifunctionalism of the family and the Tséligato no longer has a reason for existing.

Communal patriarchism is likewise shattered. When land is distri-
[514] buted to conjugal families, they are established as autonomous economic
[525] units. They are thus emancipated. The economic family community gives way to individualism and small-scale individual enterprises.